

Madison County Proposed Building Project

Commission Comments by Ted Coffman

For several years Madison County has been wrestling with growing pains and the fact that eight of your county offices are located outside of the Courthouse. This lack of space coupled with a lawsuit over handicapped accessibility and several lawsuits over the Madison County jail prompted us to look into the possibility of adding on to the back of the Courthouse.

Two years ago we contracted with the MSU School of Architecture to design an addition. To get the space we needed, the addition would have overpowered and been larger than the existing Courthouse (the oldest in the State). We came to the conclusion that there just wasn't enough space in the back. In February of this year, we contracted with SMA Architects from Helena to come up with a design to fit our needs.

SMA visited with every department head to determine future space needs. With this programming complete we looked for a site to fit our future space needs. Madison County already owned three lots directly across the highway to the north of the front steps of the Courthouse. Those three lots together with two adjacent lots that we have under contract to purchase would provide ample room to build a "Law and Justice" center that would house a new jail, offices for all Court functions and additional space for future growth.

With the Sheriff, Judges, and Clerk of Court moving to the new building, and a small addition on the back of the historic Courthouse for much needed Clerk and Recorder vault space and an elevator to access all floors, we will be able to house all departments within the two buildings.

One of the big issues, in addition to the jail lawsuits, is having to transport prisoners to another facility. This takes a minimum of three hours per trip to Dillon, the closest facility. That is time and resources that a deputy is out of our County and unavailable for service to the citizens of Madison County.

The project will be broken down into two phases. Law and Justice Center starting construction in late Spring of 2007 and the Courthouse addition the following year. The entire project is estimated to cost ten million dollars, with the Law and Justice Center costing approximately 8.5 million and the addition to existing Courthouse 1.5 million.

The Commissioners believe that this is a worthy project and are placing the issue on the ballot asking for the authority to sell ten million dollars worth of bonds to pay for this project. D.A. Davidson has worked out a repayment schedule for 20 years. To figure out your cost per year for 20 years, check the TAXABLE VALUE in the upper right hand corner of your property tax statement and multiply that number by .019 to find the added cost per year.